BROOKLYN ARMY TERMINAL
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name
INTRODUCTORY TEXT

Adaptation

The federal government began building the Brooklyn Army Terminal in May 1918 to serve as a military depot and supply base. The massive four-million-square-foot complex was completed in September 1919, just 16 months later. This feat is impressive even by today’s standards. Since its creation, the terminal has helped deploy millions of troops and tons of supplies to battlefronts around the world.

An Architectural Feat

Cass Gilbert, best known for his Beaux Arts and Gothic buildings, was the principal architect. Gilbert designed the US Custom House, the Broadway Chambers Building, the Essex County Courthouse, and the highly acclaimed Woolworth Building. Though the Brooklyn Army Terminal’s modern, utilitarian style was different from Gilbert’s best-known work, it’s recognized for its powerful aesthetic and highly functional form. The design was highly innovative for its time: constructed without girders, using steel-reinforced concrete slabs and included 96 centrally controlled elevators, the largest elevator installation at that time. The larger of the two buildings featured a huge skylight-enclosed atrium, which featured staggered balconies from which cargo could be loaded and unloaded by movable cranes. Additionally, the entire complex was interconnected, with bridges on the third floor linking the two main buildings.

World War II

The Brooklyn Army Terminal was most-heavily trafficked during WWII, during which more than 20,000 military and civilian personnel were employed there. The terminal was the headquarters for the New York Port of Embarkation, a region-wide operation covering more than a dozen facilities that moved 3.2 million troops and 37 million tons of military supplies to fronts across the globe. The most famous soldier to deploy from the Brooklyn Army Terminal was Elvis Presley who shipped off to Germany in September 1958.

From Military to Manufacturing

The Brooklyn Army Terminal remained active through the early 1970s with both military and civilian tenants. New York City purchased the Brooklyn Army Terminal from the federal government in 1981 with the intention of repurposing the structure for manufacturing and industrial use.

Today’s Brooklyn Army Terminal: Flexible Business Spaces

Today, a full century after ground was broken, the Brooklyn Army Terminal is one of the most innovative and accessible manufacturing campuses in the world. With 500,000 square feet of affordable industrial space, the Brooklyn Army Terminal is New York City’s premier space for companies working in traditional and advanced manufacturing, food and fashion, and film/TV/media production. The terminal features a recently renovated Food Manufacturing Hub and space for fashion companies and garment manufacturers.

1. Closely observe **Document 1**. Infer what is taking place here and supply evidence to support your inference.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. What tools are being used to aid the construction?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Geographically, where is this construction taking place? Provide evidence to support your claim.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

**Document 2b:** “Army to lease terminal here,” *Brooklyn Times Union*. 19 Jan 1920.
1. **Document 2a** mentions the need for a “storehouse in South Brooklyn for the embarkation of supplies for the overseas army.” Use context clues to define what “embarkation” means.

2. What event is taking place overseas that requires an “army storehouse” in March 1918?

3. According to **Document 2b**, what happened to the “war activities” by January 1920?

4. Consequently, what is the Army doing to the Army Terminal in South Brooklyn?
Rivals of Karnak and Luxor

Largest Buildings in the World, at South Brooklyn Army Base, Put to Shame Creative Efforts of the Ancients

Adaptation:

The greatest buildings of antiquity were the temples of Karnak and Luxor. After thousands of years their ruins remain among the wonders of the world. Portions of Karnak’s hall of columns still stand unrivalled in rugged splendor—enduring fragments of a power that dominated in earlier times.

In South Brooklyn, the United States Army maintains a plant known as the Army Supply Base. This is the principal peacetime unit of the New York General Depot of the United States Army. This is the largest purchase, storage, supply and repair depot of the United States Army, and probably the largest in the world. It is located on 100 acres of land with a waterfront having a depth of 25 feet at low tide. The total cost of buildings and land was $33,972,727.

Upon this site a number of steel and concrete buildings have been constructed, two of which, “A” and “B,” are among the largest buildings in the world. Building “B,” with a floor space of 2,321,640 square feet, is the largest permanent building ever erected. A thrill of romance sends one’s mind searching through the past for comparable edifices. Luxor and Karnak have lost much through the ages.
1. Karnak and Luxor are sacred Egyptian temples of worship. Why do you think the author of Document 3 chose to compare the Army Terminal to these “wonders of the world?”

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. Fill in the blanks – The Army Supply Base is the largest:

   a. 
   
   b. 
   
   c. 
   
   d. of the _________________________ and probably the _________________.

3. What is special about Building “B,” specifically?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you agree with the author’s assertion that the Army Supply Base “put to shame creative efforts of the ancients” (i.e. Egyptians)? Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

1. What, according to Document 4a, is being constructed at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in the 1940s?

2. What does Document 4c refer to the Brooklyn Army Terminal as? What war is taking place overseas this time?

3. How did the Brooklyn Army Terminal (also referred to as the Bush Terminal) contribute to the war effort (HINT: it wasn’t troops)?

4. Revisit Document 4a and infer why this pier was being constructed at the Brooklyn Army Terminal at this time.
**Document 5b:** *Private Catherine O’Mara, Telephone Operator at the Brooklyn Army Base.* Brooklyn Daily Eagle photographs, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Collection.

![Image of Private Catherine O’Mara](image)


> John Rogers, master of the Army Tug LT-233 at the Army Base, was cited for bravery at a ceremony held at the Port of Embarkation. On Nov. 25, 1950, Master Rogers, and one deckhand, piloted his tug through a hurricane in New York Harbor, retrieving and securing government craft.
1. Examine Document 5a and list three businesses represented in this atlas page:
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

2. According to Document 5b, who is Catherine O’Mara and what does she do at the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

3. John Rogers, from Document 5c, had yet another role at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. What did he operate and why was he “cited for bravery?”

4. Use your observations from Documents 5a, b and c to make an inference about the businesses or people who operated at the Brooklyn Army Terminal.
Activity ceases at Brooklyn Army Terminal as the 47-year-old military site shuts down

By JOHN P. CALLAHAN

Minerva Davidson wiped away a tear, and one of the high-ranking military officials who could not, because he was standing at attention, blinked hard. They were among several hundred persons on the parade ground of the Brooklyn Army Terminal yesterday when Taps was played for the closing of the 47-year-old terminal.

Mrs. Davidson, who was the first stenographer hired at the 105-acre military site when it was opened in 1919, said she wasn’t interested in “all the talk about the number of troops and all the cargoes that have moved through here.”

Like so many of the 3,200 military and civilian personnel who helped move a quarter-million tons of military supplies and thousands of soldiers and their dependents each month to and from United States installations abroad, the 70-year-old former secretary was more than sad. She was “a bit disappointed.”

One of her associates among the remaining skeleton civilian force remarked: “Maybe McNamara knows what he’s doing, closing us down. But he certainly can’t imagine the hardship created by what he is saving.”

The reference was to the decision of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara in 1964 to close 95 bases in 33 states and abroad, including the Brooklyn base. The Army Terminal, in the Bay Ridge section of the borough, also employed almost 1,000 members of Local 1814, the largest unit in the International Longshoremen’s Association.

Asked yesterday what would happen to the men, Anthony M. Scotto, president of the local, said they would be assigned to other areas in the Port of New York. Mr. Scotto declined to attend the closing ceremonies, adding: “I’d rather not go to my own funeral.”

A 21-gun cannon blast and the First Army’s 297th Army Band’s rendition of the Colonel Bogey March, helped snap the audience out of a pall of sadness that was passed to the new command.

The new command is the Bayonne (N.J.) Military Ocean Terminal, to which all of the terminal operations have been transferred.

Outside the high-wired fence, residents of the area, including shopkeepers, watched the ceremony. They were among the people studied in a statistical analysis in 1964 and 1965 in vain efforts to dissuade Secretary McNamara from closing the terminal. The study showed that in addition to the dislocation for 1,000 longshoremen, the loss of employment for more than 2,000 other workers meant a loss of $40 million a year that the Army base personnel spent in the neighborhood.

In addition, the shutdown meant a loss of close to $1 million a month spent for maintenance and repairs on the Navy’s Military Transportation Service ships in yards and repair shops near the terminal.

Albert Cantor, deputy director of terminal operations, who had been at the base for 40 years, said it was “the busiest military supply terminal in the world.”

The General Services Administration will soon offer the terminal to other Federal agencies. If they do not want it, civilian bids will be invited. No one knew yesterday what would happen if the facility was unwanted.

“Meanwhile, we will be here until shortly after Dec. 31, winding things up,” a member of the traffic management and terminal services said. “We means about 26 persons, he added.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!
Taps Bids a Sad Farewell to an Army Terminal

By JOHN P. CALLAHAN

Minerva Davidson wiped away a tear, and one of the high-ranking military officials who could not, because he was standing at attention, blinked hard. They were among several hundred persons on the parade ground of the Brooklyn Army Terminal yesterday when Taps was played for the closing of the 47-year-old terminal.

Mrs. Davidson, who was the first stenographer hired at the 105-acre military site when it was opened in 1919, said she wasn't interested in “all the talk about the number of troops and all the cargo that has moved through here.”

Like so many of the 2,300 military and civilian personnel who helped move a quarter-million tons of military supplies and thousands of soldiers and their dependents each month to and from United States installations abroad, the 70-year-old former secretary was more than sad. She was “a bit disappointed,”

One of her associates among the remaining skeleton civilian force remarked: “Maybe McNamara knows what he’s doing, closing us down. But he certainly can’t imagine the hardship created by what he is saving.”

The reference was to the decision of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara in 1964 to close 95 bases in 33 states and abroad, including the Brooklyn base. The Army Terminal, in the Bay Ridge section of the borough, also employed almost 1,000 members of Local 1814, the largest unit in the International Longshoremen’s Association.

Outside the high wired fence, residents of the area, including shopkeepers, watched the ceremonies. They were among the people studied in a statistical analysis in 1964 and 1965 in vain efforts to dissuade Secretary McNamara from closing the terminal. The study showed that in addition to the dislocation for 1,000 longshoremen, the loss of employment for more than 2,000 other workers meant a loss of $40-million a year that the Army base personnel spent in the neighborhood.

In addition, the shutdown meant a loss of close to $1-million a month spent for maintenance and repairs on the Navy’s Military Sea Transportation Service ships in yards and repair shops near the terminal.
1. Who is Minerva Davidson? When did she start working at the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

2. What “hardship” does Document 6 refer to?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

3. What is the Federal Government saving by closing the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

4. Which side do you think the author is sympathetic to – those that want to keep the Brooklyn Army Terminal open or those that want to close it? How do you know?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Pier Workers Full of Zest
As Terminal Docks Reopen

The city's Ports and Terminals Department, which leased Piers 1 and 2 and 20 acres of upland from the Army Corps of Engineers, expects 500 men will be employed steadily there eventually. A private shipping firm, International Terminal Operators, operates the piers under a sublease from the city.

As the work of removing the 160-container cargo proceeded, the dock workers' union boss, Anthony Sciscitto, appeared and was cheered by the men. Sciscitto is president of Brooklyn Local 1824 of the International Longshoremen's Association.

Prime Movers on Hand

The Brooklyn Army Terminal Development Committee, a group of local business and civic leaders, also showed up. The committee, along with local congressmen and Sciscitto, had been pressing for the reactivating of the former Army base.

Two smaller piers, 3 and 4, are still in use by the Navy's Military Sea Transport Service, which has eight vessels and about 500 civilian employees at the base. The eastern area office of the Military Traffic Management and Terminal Service has 2,000 more employees, and the former Morgan Marine's post office is also "temporarily" there.

Longshoremen work at the SS Edelkottorf carrying containerized cargo.

By HARRY DANYLUK and POLLY KLINE News 115

With high spirits and unusual zest, two gangs of longshoremen went to work yesterday unloading a ship at a Brooklyn pier that had been empty and idle since November 1966.

The arrival of the vessel, a French freighter, marked the reactivation of the Brooklyn Army Terminal's principal pier under sponsorship of the city Economic Development Administration.

Jobs Were Uncertain

"It's great to be back at a steady pier—our own pier," said 32-year-old Joseph Aline, one of the 70 men who started unloading the containerized cargo at 8 a.m. from the SS Edelkottorf of the Fabre Line.

A machine worker with 27 years of experience on Brooklyn piers, Aline had been laid off when the Defense Department closed the terminal at 58th St. and First Ave., on the Bay Ridge waterfront. Like the others, he went gratefully to their old Army Terminal docks, Aline, of 280 Stratford Rd., Flatbush, had been depending on uncertain jobs on Manhattan, Staten Island or New Jersey piers.

Another worker, dockman Daniel Diano, 24, of Rockaway, called the reopening of the terminal's Pier 1 "the greatest thing that could have happened to us." The 7,500-ton Sottomor, which in the past would have docked in Port Newark, tied up at 7 a.m. A second ship, the Kaiser Dampfer Line, was to arrive at the pier from Africa today.
1. How many years had the Brooklyn Army Terminal been closed when Document 7 was written?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

2. What organization now oversees the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

3. Which type of workers does the reopening of the Brooklyn Army Terminal benefit?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

4. Infer what a longshoreman’s work entails from the article.

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

1. According to Document 8a’s headline, what is happening to the Brooklyn Army Terminal (again)?

2. How many years has passed since the last shutdown (HINT: refer to Document 7)?

3. Who is responsible for shutting down the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

4. Who does Document 8b say is against shutting down the Brooklyn Army Terminal? What reason do they provide?
Row Housing Plans

The row housing units are 25' wide and of fireproof concrete block and pre-cast concrete plank construction. Built in rows of six units along streets or pedestrian paths sloping down from 2nd Avenue, the units step down in height as they approach Building "B". The street incline permits the units nearest 2nd Avenue to accommodate covered parking. Additional outside parking is provided.

The row housing contains 90 three bedroom dwelling units and 45 four bedroom dwelling units, a total of 135 floor-through units with exposures on both the private courtyard and on a street or pedestrian path. Each ground level dwelling unit has direct access to the adjoining garden, and the upper levels have terraces facing the private courtyard.

Professional Offices: Because of the proximity of the Brooklyn Army Terminal Site to the Lutheran Medical Center, the second and third levels of the row housing facing 2nd Avenue and along 60th Street may be developed as professional offices. A total area of 40,000 square feet can provide for individual suites or larger spaces suitable for group medical practices and related functions. Parking spaces are provided for the professional office space tenants, their employees and patients.

The development plan is estimated to generate the following on-site jobs:

**DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Development</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garage</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Maintenance</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2623</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JOB TYPES**

- Construction
- Industrial
- Cosmetic
- Electronic
- Food Processing
- Garment
- Graphics
- Metal Assembly
- Paper
- Plastic Parts
- Service Industry
- Teamsters
- Supervisory
- Carpenters
- Electricians
- Glazers
- Iron Workers & Engineers
- Laborers
- Masons
- Painters & Tile Setters
- Sheet Metal & Steamfitters
- Supervisory

**Brooklyn Connections**
1. Examine **Documents 9a and b**. What are these documents proposing be done with the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

2. How many of the following jobs would this proposal make?
   
   a. Development Jobs:

   b. Permanent Jobs:

   c. Total Jobs:

3. What kind of businesses would this proposal attract to the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

4. Do you think it is a good or bad idea to turn the Brooklyn Army Terminal into housing? Why?


---

**Art marches into historic Army depot**

**BY REUVEN BLAU**  
**NEW YORK DAILY NEWS**

THIS art exhibition is the bomb.  
Artists who have set up shop inside the historic Brooklyn Army Terminal will showcase their work inside 93 studios during a rare public viewing later this month.  
“I’m so excited to help all of these emerging artists to sell their artwork and expose them to New York City,” said Anita Durst, who runs Chashama, the nonprofit behind the waterfront exhibit.  
Visitors can take a formal tour of the studios filled with works in progress and buy finished pieces.  
The exhibit is the latest effort to help publicize some homegrown works by cash-strapped painters and sculptors.  
The historic Sunset Park military complex is now used by close to 100 artists, who pay as little as 80 cents per square foot for space thanks to a city-backed program.  
The studios are located inside two formerly vacant 58th St buildings at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, which is run by the city’s Economic Development Corp.  
Under the setup, studios range from $200 to $400 for the artists, who would have to pay approximately $1,000 for a regular 400-square foot studio in the neighborhood.  
The low rents have enabled the artists to branch out without breaking the bank.  
“I was working in my living room and dining room,” recalled expressionist painter Kristin Reed, who resides in Park Slope. “I couldn’t leave paint all over the place because I have a family.”

The city is working to repair and renovate the 95-year-old former military depot on the waterfront. When completed in 1919, it was the largest concrete building in the world.  
The city purchased the historic terminal in 1987, and converted it into a center for manufacturing businesses.  
But there are many open spots which the city has offered to the art community.  
For information, visit www.chashamam.org.  
rbau@nydailynews.com

---

**Sheltering History**

**Take Army Terminal Grand Tour**

**BY MATT CHABAN**

What do Elvis Presley, Prohibition-era bootleggers and dinosaur bones all have in common? They have all spent their fair share of time at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in Sunset Park.

And now you can, too. For the first time, the city is offering regular tours of the 95-year old former military depot on the waterfront ...

“I don’t think there’s another place like it in New York,” said Andrew Gustafson, a guide from Turnstile Tours ...

“It’s so historical and so beautiful,” [chocolate kind Jacque] Torres said. “Nobody has to tell you the history. You can see it and feel it everywhere.”
1. What do Documents 10a – d illustrate has happened at the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

2. What incentives, according to Document 10a and c, were businesses offered to move to the Brooklyn Army Terminal?

3. List three types of business that exist the Brooklyn Army Terminal:
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

4. According to Document 10d, what else is happening at the Brooklyn Army Terminal? Why would the public want to visit it today?
GLOSSARY

Aesthetic: relating to art or beauty

Antiquity: ancient times

Assertion: a claim or opinion

Beaux Arts: an architectural style pioneered in Paris France from the 1830s – 1900

Civilian: a person who is not a member of the military or of a police or firefighting force

Desertion: to abandon or leave

Dissuade: to convince (someone) not to do something

Dislocate: to cause (a business, system, etc.) to change in some major way : to stop (something) from functioning as it used to function

Front: as in battlefront, where war is fought

Girder: a strong beam used to build buildings, bridges, etc.

Gothic: a style of architecture that was popular in Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries and that uses pointed arches, thin and tall walls, and large windows

Longshoreman: a person whose job is to load and unload ships at a port

New York Port of Embarkation (also known as New York General Depot): a United States Army command responsible for the movement of troops and supplies from the United States to overseas commands

Utilitarian: made to be useful rather than to be decorative or comfortable